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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND DRL

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SUBJECT: STATUS OF RWANDAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASS, PLEASE TREAT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On 13 March, Ambassador met with Sylvie Zainabo Kayitesi, the Chairperson of the National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR), to present the 2005 Human Rights Report (HRR) and discuss the work of the NCHR. Ambassador Arietti discussed the importance the USG places on the respect for human rights and the rule of law and emphasized his desire to use the 2005 HRR as a tool for dialogue with the government on human rights issues. Ms. Kayitesi expressed appreciation for the meeting and agreed that the USG and GOR should have a close and ongoing dialogue on human rights issues. She described the work of the Commission as two-fold: investigating reported human rights abuses and educating all Rwandans on human rights. Kayitesi acknowledged that the Commission does not have adequate resources to investigate all the cases reported but said that the process does work for cases that are investigated. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Background. The NCHR was established by the GOR on 31 December, 2002 to promote and protect human rights. It has seven commissioners who serve three-year terms and a staff of 42 employees. Kayitesi has been serving for three years as Chairperson of the Commission. In addition to conducting investigations and drafting an annual Human Rights Report, the NCHR conducts extensive training and sensitization programs directed at the Rwandan population and has a gacaca monitoring program. The NCHR receives its funding from the EU, UNICEF, UNDP and the Swiss and German governments. End background.

¶3. (SBU) Kayitesi said that the Commission would be finished with its 2005 report by the end of April. The Commission receives complaints from citizens and has the authority to fully investigate all charges of human rights violations. Commission investigators interview the victims, the local authorities and serve as liaison with the Office of the Prosecutor General to communicate their findings and make recommendations. In its annual reports submitted to Parliament and publicly debated, the NCHR publishes the details of its investigations, any actions taken as a result of the investigations, and its opinion and recommendation.

¶4. (SBU) Kayitesi said that the NCHR has good relations with human rights NGOs and noted that the law requires such collaboration. She said that there would be a meeting with human rights organizations, including PROFEM and local NGO LIPRODHOR, to discuss coordination on 30 March.

¶5. (SBU) Kayitesi noted that because of Rwanda's history an inherent aspect of the Commission's job is promoting reconciliation. She said that when Rwandans return, they see that the country has changed and stay, but unfortunately, many in the Diaspora still have the wrong impression of what is happening inside Rwanda.

¶6. (SBU) Comment. The NCHR is criticized by some international NGOs and diplomats for lacking independence. While it is not publicly critical of GOR policies or senior government officials, it does conduct investigations into human rights abuses and publishes its findings, including criticisms by name of law enforcement and local government officials. End comment.

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